

Supporting and Background Information

An Introduction to the UK & Ireland Lakes Network

The UK and Ireland Lakes Network formed on the principle that integrated and sustainable management of lakes, lochs, loughs and llyns is more achievable through the sharing of the experience and expertise gained by practitioners and communities across these islands.

The UK and Ireland Lakes Network (UKILN - <https://ukandirelandlakes.org/>) – is a charitable organisation formed in 2010 as part of the legacy from a series of projects focussed on lake protection and habitat restoration in the Lake District National Park. Since then, the network has organised an annual conference to highlight best practice and positive stories around freshwater management, sustainable use of lakes and the community benefits that arise. Through rotating the annual conference around the four UK home nations and Ireland a wide network of practitioners from statutory bodies, local lake stakeholder groups and specialist professionals has been forged and maintained. The trustees of UKILN provide the networks' governance and a wider group of volunteers provides logistical input to the events and communications.

UKILN Mission

Lakes in the UK and Ireland will sustainably reach their full ecological, economic, cultural and landscape potential.

UKILN objectives

1. Promote the benefit of healthy lakes.
 2. Promote the preservation and restoration of lake and wetland habitats as home for a large array of plants and animals, keeping their biodiversity as a treasure for today's and future generations.
 3. Bring together organisations and individuals that have a responsibility and a desire to protect and manage lake environments, their catchments and the well-being of the people and economies connected to them.
 4. Develop and share knowledge and experience on best practice in lake and catchment management.
 5. Seek to influence policies, individually or collectively, that will promote healthy lakes with sustainably managed catchments and economies for the benefits of present and future generations.
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An Introduction to the Lough Erne Landscape Partnership Scheme

The Lough Erne Landscape Partnership (LELP) was established in 2015 with the aim to promote, protect and enhance the natural, built and cultural heritage of the Lough Erne region. Following an intensive development process an application to National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) in 2018 was successful in securing a sum of £2.6million to deliver a scheme of 23 projects, which included a small grants Community Engagement and Farming Fund (that has to date commissioned a further 22 projects).

The scheme works in partnership with RSPB NI as lead partner, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Fermanagh Rural Community Network, National Trust, Upper Lough Erne Region, Waterways Ireland and Lough Erne Heritage. Scheme delivery began in Summer 2018 and is due for completion in December 2024.

Full details of the programme, its underpinning philosophy, its ambitions and its component projects are presented here: www.lelp.org.uk

LELP Mission

The Lough Erne Landscape Partnership (LELP) focusses on the conservation and promotion of Lough Erne's landscape character and unique heritage. LELP is addressing ecological issues, reconnecting communities with their heritage, bringing economic and social benefits, and creating links between stakeholders to realise a longer-term goal of co-ordinated management of the landscape.

LELP Objectives

1. To connect and engage people with their unique landscape by developing skills, improving confidence and providing opportunities to learn, change perceptions and influence its management.
2. To improve and protect biodiversity and conserve the built heritage of our unique landscape, and involve communities in its protection, interpretation and conservation.
3. To create and improve physical and intellectual access to and around the Lough making it a better place to live, work and visit.
4. To engage with communities to generate pride in their unique cultural heritage, to celebrate and be emotionally and physically involved with it.

An Introduction to the LELP/UKILN collaboration for the 2024 Lough Erne Stillwaters Conference

The collaboration between Lough Erne Landscape Partnership and the UKILN is focused on creating an event on 3-4 October 2024 to bring the local community and stakeholders together with the UK and Ireland Lakes Network around the themes of:

Engaging communities with still waters

- seeks to deepen the connection between people and still waters.
- through comprehensive understanding and sustainable engagement strategies, we aim to foster enduring partnerships that enrich both communities and the ecosystem.
- establishing a vibrant support network and community of practice, we will empower local stakeholders across various sectors to collaborate effectively, ensuring the long-term vitality for still waters.
- uniting communities and sectors in a collective effort towards environmental stewardship and social enrichment

Dealing with water quality pressures

- Lough Erne, as many other UK water bodies, faces water quality pressures, including pollution from agricultural runoff, sewage discharge, and urban development. These factors contribute to nutrient enrichment, sedimentation, and habitat degradation within the lake ecosystem.
- there is a need to increase the understanding in the area of the drivers behind harmful algal blooms, as preventative measures are usually cheaper and quicker than reactive management.
- local communities reliant on Lough Erne for drinking water, recreation, and livelihoods could experience detrimental impacts if water quality were to decline.
- decreased water quality jeopardizes public health, diminishes recreational opportunities, and threatens the economic viability of industries such as tourism.

Resilient nature and adapting to climate change

- loss of local biodiversity & the threats of invasive species on aquatic ecosystems remains a high risk for the long-term ecological resilience of Lough Erne
- options such as restoring natural habitats and implementing sustainable land management practices around Lough Erne could mean the area is better able to withstand the impacts of climate change, such as extreme weather events and habitat loss.
- community involvement plays a crucial role in building resilience, as local residents are empowered to participate in protection efforts, and they can adapt to changing environmental conditions in ways which foster social inclusion and equity.

Exemplar landscape scale management

- engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders enables a holistic approach, for example integrating strategies for small lakes, cross-border waterbodies, Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), catchment-based methodologies etc.

- diverse stakeholder cooperation is enabled to address shared environmental challenges and capitalize on opportunities for ecological restoration and community well-being.
- this integrated management model for Lough Erne not only safeguards the region's natural heritage but also cultivates stronger community connections, fostering a sense of stewardship and pride among local residents.

Additional information on the specification

This section is the information shared with our funder, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, so represents the expectations that need to be met to satisfy their involvement in this collaboration. Of particular importance to this Commission are the measured outcomes and progress indicators that need to be incorporated into the conference design and reporting so that these outcomes are maximised.

Why do we need an event?

Lakes are under pressure and will be increasingly so as the climate changes. Lakes are also receiving increasing public and media attention to galvanise action. This event is an opportunity to bring people together in a collaborative forum to connect and share best practice to build capability and form relationships which can provide ongoing peer support.

The local impact of this proposal will bring together and empower individuals and communities who gain benefits from the large loughs of Northern Ireland, with practitioners from across the UK and Ireland. The local impact will be an increase in the community's awareness, capacity and future resilience to the challenges of maintaining healthy freshwater loughs. It is also an opportunity for people across UK & Ireland to learn from the experiences around Lough Erne and Lough Neagh.

Why create the event through a co-design process?

This will enable the event to meet the needs of stakeholders in Northern Ireland and those within the wider UK & Ireland Lakes Network. An event planning working group including Lough Erne and Lough Neagh, UK & Ireland Lakes Network and other interested stakeholders will steer this process.

They should own the event, perhaps contribute to delivery and seek impactful outcomes. This is likely to generate a more engaging and capacity developing event than the usual "talk and listen" conference format.

The outputs of co-design would potentially provide a wider range and tailored ways for participants to engage with the event. From previous consultations within its network, UKILN have identified options to test further, such as hybrid/online options and the possibility of regional in-person meet ups at "lake hubs" across UK and Ireland. Such new ways in which network members can interact with Lough Erne without incurring carbon and travel costs are aimed to support LELP in their wider festival of activity around the Lough.

Why access support for stakeholder mapping, facilitating codesign of the event?

This additional and perhaps specialist resource will help us find and connect with new audiences, support development of diversity, equitable and inclusive strategic thinking and actions, and develop an effectively designed event. This support is needed as no staff are currently employed by UK & Ireland Lakes Network and the capacity of LELP to commit staff resource with the required skills is limited.

How will this project leave a sustainable legacy in the local area and for UKILN:

This proposal aims to leave a sustainable legacy in the Lough Erne area by empowering local communities, enhancing their awareness and capacity for freshwater protection, fostering

enduring partnerships between stakeholders, and creating a vibrant support network and community of practice that will continue to enrich both communities and the ecosystem in the long term.

This proposal will enable the UK and Ireland Lakes Network to seek to build a stronger, more effective and engaged network (for instance an active community of practice). This includes exploring an active participatory role for members of the network to generate deeper connections with lake communities and beyond in developing the 2024 event; creating and delivering a strategic communications plan; strengthening the network and exploring the formation of a community of practice. At the end of this period UKILN will have a better understanding of how they can develop to support the network going forward. We will capture learning and evaluate progress through this process.

For the UK & Ireland Lakes Network this event at Lough Erne offers the opportunity to develop the Network and the way it interacts with lake communities by:

- testing the appetite for, and the process by which it engages stakeholders in event planning.
- exploring the potential for forming a lasting community of practice model through the development, delivery and learning from this event.
- capturing the social capital, the successes and failures, barriers, constraints and future opportunities.
- Creating key messages and options for the UK & Ireland Lakes Network in terms of future development.

Communities of practice are groups of people united by a shared interest or activity, where regular interaction leads to collective improvement. They support other involved organisations by fostering peer-to-peer connections, accelerating learning, bridging knowledge gaps, scaling best practices, and improving overall delivery quality.

In this instance UK & Ireland Lakes Network offers standards, direction and capability through its formal background. The lake community offers the collaboration, cooperation, sense of place and social learning inherent in its informal connections. A community of practice then can then build and grow in sustainable and equitable ways attuned and responsive to local needs and desires.

Initial discussions within the Lough Erne Landscape Partnership members to identify currently underserved stakeholders focused on children and young people. For example, the technical college in Enniskillen runs tourism courses for those students not pursuing more academic routes. However, the limited initial employment opportunities locally are a barrier to retaining the gained knowledge and community cohesion around the Lough once they graduate. Engagement at this event with students, educational providers and tourism businesses who rely on a thriving Lough Erne, would be one way to ensure the barriers between young people and the local tourism trade are explored.

On a more strategic level, the feedback emerging from the legacy consultations for LELP also highlights an opportunity for future activity at Lough Erne, continuing with the work of the

Partnership to help secure the unique heritage and culture of the Lough Erne area and deliver sustainable communities. From the consultations, we learned that people want Lough Erne to be a place where the water is of high quality and properly managed, and where people can explore and enjoy in ways that sustain the area's environment, culture and communities. Through this event, we can ensure that we learn from experts, and engage local communities in the development of a future management plan for Lough Erne.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity enquiry will form part of the co-design and development phase of the event planning, so that the needs of the local communities who may not typically be involved in freshwater protection are considered at an early stage. This will be new learning for UKILN & LELP and will be a model for how to approach inclusivity for events in future years. Evaluation of the DEI outcomes will be captured and reported.

What costs will there be to participants?

The event must be accessible to local people and those interested in still water management across the UK. Some support will be required to ensure that local community participants in Northern Ireland and from across the UK can attend. Some funds have been included in the request to Esmée, and other funding will be sought to add to that in case demand for concessions are higher than expected.

In order to secure commitment to the event however a registration fee is likely to be charged. This will be subject to further discussion and scoping in terms of tiered contribution/bursary options depending on how great the financial barrier is for particular stakeholder groups/individuals.

Who do you work with or who else do you think needs to be supported to make your goals successful?

- LELP and UKILN – a partnership approach
- Contracted resources - to provide sufficient resource to deliver the project.
- Members of the wider UK & Ireland Lakes Network – to bring in different voices and experience to Lough Erne and also to facilitate hybrid participation – benefit will be to the network that engage (in person or remotely) as well as locally to Lough Erne and wider Northern Ireland.
- The Board, Working Group, project partners and community stakeholders involved in LELP.
- Fermanagh Lakelands Tourism membership network.
- Lough Erne tourism providers, landowners and local community groups – to embed the legacy and learning locally.
- Esmee Fairburn have conducted research and published a report on [A more diverse, equitable and inclusive environment sector](#). This should inform the development of our event.

What is a “Community of Practice”?

SOURCE: EMILY WEBBER <https://communitiesofpractice.work/>

Communities of practice are groups of people **connected** through a **shared passion** for something they do and **collectively improve** as they **interact regularly**.

They help organisations thrive by

Supporting people

through peer-to-peer connections, giving them the confidence and motivation to succeed.

Growing capability

by accelerating individual learning and raising collective organisational skills.

Bridging knowledge

by joining up people, ideas, knowledge and related work to reduce gaps and silos.

Scaling approaches

allowing the sharing and spreading of good practices across the organisation to create consistency.

Improving practices

facilitating collaboration opportunities that raise the standard and quality of your delivery.



What risks have UKILN/LELP identified and how will these be mitigated?

Risk	Mitigation
Participation in person is not a feasible option for interested stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a plan for a minimum viable model which is feasible, and then options for events of two further scales. • funding could be applied differently at different event scales,
Needs of potential participants cannot be met due to supply of expertise / timing / location constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support minimum viable model and hybrid options to provide further engagement and benefit.
Limited community participation due to conflicting events elsewhere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LELP have worked closely with Fermanagh Lakeland Tourism to set event dates and extend the typical tourism season
Securing an appropriate venue that can supply all needs within budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early engagement with suppliers is needed • be creative and flexible
Message doesn't get across about freshwater protection or sustainable lake management with a positive impact not felt or carried forward locally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mitigation is in the co-design and consultation for the workshop/conference activities to reach the right "local influencers" and stakeholder groups • early stakeholder mapping is planned with funding support being used for this task to reduce internal capacity constraints
Focus may be too local, e.g. around Enniskillen town where services and accommodation are focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create strong link and connecting narrative with LELP celebration events across whole Lough Erne catchment • Other satellite locations for hybrid conference venues and local networking at remote "hubs", e.g. Lough Neagh, Lake District, Norfolk Broads

How will we measure outcomes

(please note this is indicative at the start of our process and should be informed by the evaluation methodology)

1. Heightened Awareness of Water Quality Pressures

Increased awareness among local communities about water quality challenges facing Lough Erne, including pollution sources and potential impacts on public health and livelihoods.

Progress Indicators

- Number of local stakeholders informed / engaged about the impact of water quality pressures on public health, recreation, and local livelihoods.
- Level of understanding among participants in addressing water quality issues post-event, and level of interest in taking local action.

2. Increased Community Engagement

Enhanced community understanding and involvement in freshwater protection through the existing local strategies and partnerships, and empowering stakeholders who would not normally be active. (in Northern Ireland and UK wide)

Progress Indicators

- Number of stakeholders engaged in event planning and preparation activities.
- Level of engagement and feedback from participants regarding the inclusivity and effectiveness of the event planning process including evaluating diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) engagement to inform future activities.

3. Strengthened Resilience to Climate Change

Improved confidence, knowledge and capacity for resilience-building initiatives among local stakeholders to mitigate the impacts of climate change on ecosystems and local communities. (in Northern Ireland and UK wide)

Progress Indicators

- Number of new strategic connections made between 'stillwaters' stakeholder groups during or within one month after the event.
- Participants reporting use of skills/knowledge gained to make change happen within one month of the event.